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Americans Trained Qaddafi Terrorists

American cloak-and-dagger operatives, skilled in the dark arts, have trained and equipped terrorist squads for Muammar Qaddafi, the dictator of Libya and promoter of world terrorism.

Dozens of victims have reportedly been hunted down and executed, probably with the cold efficiency American know-how has brought to the murder profession. One death squad was discovered in the United States and expelled before it could complete its grisly mission.

According to secret Justice Department files, the American experts have taught Qaddafi's killers how to construct sophisticated boobytraps that can turn such innocent objects as a book, telephone, or toothpaste tube into murder weapons.

The American ringleader, Frank Terpil, even offered to smuggle into Libya a U.S. Redeye missile, a shoulder-launched, heat-seeking weapon that can bring down an airliner.

Qaddafi, a crucible of anger without focus, supports terrorist groups around the world from Ireland to Malaysia. Declares one federal investigator's report: "Libya publicly admits that it gives training, weaponry and funding to terrorist organizations throughout the world, specifically admitting support of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Irish Republican Army, Red Brigade and Japanese Red Army."

The report adds: "Also revealed in the investigation was the supply by

United States firms of sophisticated timing devices, radio control devices and sensitive surveillance and communications equipment to unauthorized representatives."

My associate, Dale Van Atta, has reviewed the classified Justice Department files, which read like a James Bond yarn. Here are just a few startling excerpts from the files:

- Terpil agreed to train Libyan agents in "espionage, sabotage and general psychological warfare" as well as "the design, manufacture, implementation and detonation of explosive devices." The undercover training was disguised as a mine-clearing operation.

- Terpil closed the deal in London with Qaddafi's brother.

- Beginning in mid-1976, the furtive Terpil, an ex-CIA agent, recruited a team of American clandestine operatives, paramilitary specialists, professional killers and explosives experts trained by CIA and U.S. special forces. By August, 1976, the Americans were esconced grandly in the former winter palace of former Libyan King Idris — a luxurious hideaway that they assigned the curious code name "Swanee."

- A palace room was turned into a workshop filled with diabolical devices. The Libyan intelligence chief liked to take trusted friends on tours of the secret room and show off the deadly wares and his American mercenaries. The visitors were most impressed with the book that detonated when it was opened.

- Witnesses quoted a Libyan lieutenant as explaining that the devices "were to be used to eliminate certain people" because Qaddafi "would feel more comfortable if they were not around."

- In July, 1977, the Americans delivered some lethal "flashlights, attache cases, transistor radios, handheld calculators and refrigerators" — all transformed into bombs — to a Libyan colonel in Tobruk. The files relate that "one of the Libyan military officers picked up one of the devices. As a result, the device along with the rest of the explosives on the truck detonated and killed three Libyan soldiers." Three American instructors were wounded.

- Veterans of the U.S. special forces taught the Libyans "American tactics and techniques," including classified methods and maneuvers developed by the United States. One of the Americans complained that some of his students "were barbarians in that they were stealing paintings and using silver tableware as darts."

- One informant slipped into the palace basement arsenal and inventoried an enormous cache of sophisticated gadgets from various American companies. "The invoices contained in the boxes listed thousands of timers at a price of millions of dollars," the report stated. Terpil sold the equipment for grossly inflated prices; one order of 100,000 timers, purchased for \$4.50 to \$6 per unit, was sold to the Libyans for up to \$250 apiece.